

The Senate last week approved war-funding legislation that would expand the benefits of the WWII-era GI Bill. President George W. Bush opposes it, saying it would encourage retirements while the military struggles to retain troops. The education benefit offers full tuition up to the cost of the most... *The Senate last week approved war-funding legislation that would expand the benefits of the WWII-era GI Bill. President George W. Bush opposes it, saying it would encourage retirements while the military struggles to retain troops. The education benefit offers full tuition up to the cost of the most expensive in-state public university — plus money for books and housing — for veterans who have served three years of active duty since 9/11. The House version of the bill includes a tax on families earning more than \$500,000 to help finance it. Do you support this bill? If not, under what circumstances would you support an expansion?*

I oppose this measure for the following reasons:

- 1) This bill was supposed to be about funding the troops in Iraq and Afghanistan through early 2009. But all kinds of extraneous spending has been added, including \$42 billion in increased welfare benefits. There is also an extension of unemployment benefit payments in the face of evidence showing that increasing terms for unemployment insurance result in longer periods of unemployment not shorter because people wait longer to look for a new job.
- 2) We should not be increasing taxes on anyone right now, with the economy such as it is; yet, this bill contains an income-tax increase on small businesses and high-income individuals. There is a disturbing trend in Congress today to tax small minorities (particular businesses, high-income individuals, smokers, private plane or boat owners) to pay for things someone else wants. Our deficit is not because we are taxed too little, but because we spend too much.
- 3) Even with the tax increase, this bill is not even close to paying for itself. We already have a deficit, which, after declining for three straight years, is increasing again as the new majority in Congress spends more and more of your money. We are heading inexorably toward a half-a-trillion-dollar deficit, and this bill only makes that worse.
- 4) There are almost certainly earmarks buried in the defense portions of the bill. The Democrat majority is no longer disclosing earmarks, so we have to go through hundreds of pages of text to try to find them. We are still sifting, but they will be there somewhere wasting money.

5) The veterans' educational benefits portion is counterproductive because it almost encourages leaving the military early since it provides large benefits after a short period of service and no substantial increases for a career military person. We have done a similar thing with law enforcement benefits in California, and many experienced officers are now retiring long before they otherwise would.

The military, like private industry, should set up benefit structures that encourage longevity, not penalize it. That's why the Defense Department and former POW Sen. John McCain also oppose this provision.

6) Even the military funding portion of this bill does not contain the safeguards that would prevent some of the waste that has occurred in recent defense spending.

REP. JOHN CAMPBELL

(R-Newport Beach)